

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am from Orange and a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence. I am a retired interior designer. Community involvement is something I have been an enthusiastic volunteer for most of my adult life. Local Orange politics, Greater New Haven organizations such as CONECT, Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen, Beth El Center, New Haven/Leon Sister City Project as well as national organizations are among causes with which I've been involved. Before becoming an interior designer, I worked in the mental health field for several years and learned about suicide and its impact on the family and community of the people involved. I also have friends and relatives who have been shot in random acts of violence. I feel passionately about the issue addressed HB-6355 and urge you to pass it.

Connecticut was the first state in the nation to pass an Extreme Risk Protection Order law, in 1999. It offers a means of last resort to temporarily remove firearms from individuals judged to be at risk of imminent harm to themselves or others. It has been shown to prevent firearm suicide and stop mass shootings. It is time to strengthen the law so that it works harder to prevent gun violence. In particular, when the protection order expires, it should be a requirement that the subject is no longer at risk of violence before the firearms are returned. That is not the case now.

Opponents of the bill claim that ERPOs lack due process protections and are abused by family members. Neither of these is true. An ex parte process is used that is virtually the same as the one used for issuing domestic violence restraining orders and the subject is entitled to a court hearing, presided over by a Judge, before the order is extended